

**LACDMH HOSTS AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE  
MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 2014**  
By Angela Trenado, L.C.S.W., Mental Health Clinical Supervisor



The American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Mental Health Conference 2014, *Strengthening Native Voices to Build a Healthy Community*, was held on Tuesday, November 4, 2014, at the California Endowment in downtown Los Angeles.

Funded for the third year by the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), the conference was an opportunity to learn how to improve mental health services and strengthen the lives of American Indian/Alaska Natives. An array of topics provided cultural alignment of the four dimensions in the symbolic medicine wheel (spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical).



Multiple breakout sessions provided information on a variety of topics which are listed below:

- **Mental Health First Aid Overview** (Mark Parra, M. Ed., *Navajo*, and Avril Cordova, *Taos/Oglala Lakota*)
- **Principles of Community Engagement in Native American Communities** (Hector M. Ramirez, *Chiricahua Apache*)
- **The Voices of Our AI/AN Families: The Importance of the Indian Child Welfare Act and Agency Collaboration** (Robert Rodriguez, *Yaqui and Comanche*, and Susan Lee, Ph.D.)
- **Techniques for Optimizing Success: Identifying and Working with Individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder** (Candace Shelton, M.S., L.I.S.A.C., *Osage*)
- **Native Voices: Healing Our Community Through Traditional Medicine, Ceremony and Teachings** (John Funmaker, *Ho-Chunk*, and George Funmaker, C.A.T.C., *Ho-Chunk/Dakota*)
- **Two Spirit Etymology and History** (Michelle Enfield, *Navajo*)
- **Restoring the Circle: Inclusive Spirituality as an Antidote to Internalized Homophobia** (Reverend Dr. Mary Crist, *Amskapi Pikuni (Southern Blackfeet)*)



Cultural ceremonies, practices and traditions played an important role in the conference (i.e., the use of prayer, traditional dancing, tribal drumming, etc.) and were demonstrated for the public. The day started with American Indian Changing Spirits Drumming Group and a flag honoring ceremony provided by Tony Cerda (Costanoan Rumsen Carmel) and Manuel Mendivil (Tohono O'odham). Julia Bogany (Gabrieleno/Tongva) gave blessings throughout the conference day. Opening remarks were said by the AI/AN UREP Subcommittee Co-chairs, Dr. Carrie Johnson (Dakota Sioux) and Angela Trenado (Tohono O'odham). Larry Gasco (Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation), Ph.D., Chairman of the Los Angeles County Mental Health Commission, and Dennis Murata, Deputy Director of the LACDMH Program Support Bureau, and the Honorable Deborah L. Sanchez (Barbareno Chumash and O'odham) of Los Angeles County Superior Court welcomed everyone. The audience was moved by the energy of the plenary speakers who included Supervisor James Ramos,

M.B.A., (San Manuel Band of Mission Indians) from the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, and a deeply spiritual presentation by Eduardo Duran, Ph.D. (Apache/Tewa/Lakota) titled *Effects of Historical Trauma*.



Other activities at the conference included art displays done by Navajo artist Harold Freeland. A variety of community resources and information booths of AI/AN agencies were available. Dr. Larry Gasco was honored and presented with a gift of acknowledgement. Dr. Daniel Dickerson, D.O., M.P.H. (Inupiaq), closed the conference with his recap of the day and a closing blessing was given.